

CHOOSING THE RIGHT OPTICS



■ By Michael Ware

“Michael, which scope should I use for this?” I hear that one pretty often. I wish answering that question was easier, but it tends to get complex. However, if we break this down a bit it'll become easier for us all.

I try to be as practical as possible when answering questions of this nature. Whether we're talking about choice in ammunition, weapon configuration, or optics, I always like to have the customer explain how they see the subject used 90% of the time.

Let's use a local consideration as an example. You've just picked up a shiny new Howa 1500 chambered in 204 Ruger for coyote hunting. What scope should we choose? First, we need think about the method in which we'll hunt. Coyote calling can be quick and you have to be prepared. A scope with a wide magnification range is helpful. I prefer to dial the power way down, as I really appreciate the wide field of view when pulling up quickly on a moving target. Something in the 3 or 4 power range might work really well for the bottom end. We also get the opportunity from time to time to watch that yote trot in from quite a distance. Thus, we'll have plenty of time to dial the magnification up and prepare for a really great shot. In circumstances like this 9 to 12 power are super.

Tube diameter is often misunderstood. “Larger tube allows more light to be transmitted,” are the comments I hear often. Unfortunately that isn't correct. Tube diameter is quite simple. The larger the tube, the more room there is for internal parts. It isn't any more complex than that. If you want a scope with a lot of elevation adjustment you'll need a space large enough to put a really large erector, so the tube needs to be larger. Front objective size, the

glass quality, and coating quality dictate the amount of usable light that is transmitted through the scope. In our case a 1" or 30mm tube will work very well.

Reticle choice these days is fantastic. There are tons of reticles for every genre of sport shooting you can think of. Some are even calibrated to various trajectories. Granted, the likelihood of these actually matching your trajectory is darned low, but practicing at the ranges associated with the reticle subtensions in your scope will provide you a quick ‘dope’ sheet that you can use to memorize and use when using your new rig. Many of these employ all kinds of drops, hashes, and lines to allow us to lead, or compensate for moving targets, wind speed, and elevation corrections. These can be significant and are a true value for our shooting, so consider them fully before choosing.

Lit reticles, side focus, flip up caps, etc. are all nice options and amenities that we may like or prefer. For the core of the optics though, we should always refer back to the 90% rule. Are we going to hunt in low light scenarios often? If so a lit reticle may be helpful. Are we going to take shots ranging from 100 to 700 yards? If so, a side objective to focus quickly and easily will be helpful. Will we hunt in the rain or snow often or walk through thick brush? Assuming we will, flip up caps are nice and

cost very little.

If we add all this up, we're looking at a very standard potential package. Something in the 1" tube range with a power in the 3-9 or 4-12 range using a 40 or 44 millimeter objective sounds easy to find and will fit our needs well. A monster objective and high magnification won't help us much especially if they are packaged in an el cheapo scope, so like I always say “quality trumps magnification”

every time.

Along with choosing a great scope for our needs, we also need to mount it properly. Ring and base combinations just high enough to clear the barrel are key to good shooting. Why? A properly mounted scope will allow us to attain a proper and consistent cheek weld on our stock. Without this we can't pull up quickly and consistently. Close your eyes, shoulder your weapon, bare your cheek down on your stock and open your eyes. If you're not looking square through your optics without movement, you have some adjustments that are necessary. Stock packs and cheek pieces can easily be added to attain this as well.

As always, all this won't mean boo if you don't get out and shoot. Iowa has no shortage of great hunts available for you and yours, so do yourself a favor and make the most of your hunt before it even starts by choosing your equipment wisely. Good shooting... 🦌🦌

TUBE DIAMETER IS OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD.